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## A CRISIS IN THE CITY.

At the opening of the session of Parliament in November last year, in the course of the preliminary fencing that usually distinguishes such an occasion, the House of Lords heard both Lord Granville and the Prime Minister, with grave and cautious words, refer to 'the events which have recently taken place in the City of London.' As a matter of course, little was elicited in the way of information as to the nature of the events in question; but the statement of Lord Salisbury, that the Governor of the Bank of England had found it his duty to communicate with the Government on the subject, and that the City owed that gentleman an incalculable debt of gratitude, was sufficient to indicate the gravity of the situation.

It is not often that what is agitating Lombard Street and Capel Court rises to national importance in the view of statesmen; but the Crisis of November last was entirely exceptional. Looking back to the times of financial trouble within living memory—to 1878, when the City of Glasgow Bank fell, and further back still to that Black Friday in 1866 when the news of Overend, Gurney, & Co.'s failure spread panic far and wide—everybody acquainted with commercial affairs felt that the possibilities of disaster this autumn were more terrible still. No wonder a shock of dismay passed over men's minds when the word went round that one of the greatest houses in the City was in difficulties! For generations its name had been a synonym for financial stability and vast wealth. At home and abroad it had passed into a proverb. Their reputation was the growth of a century of mercantile skill and uprightness displayed in the very front ranks of commerce. The crash of their fall, if it had been accomplished, would literally have made the farthest corners of the earth tremble.

But the peculiarity of the Crisis of 1890 was that the worst was forestalled. The very magnitude of the threatened disaster inspired a determination that it must not happen, and, by happy

chance, there were men at the head of affairs equal to the emergency. The Governor of the Bank of England, acting in concert with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, took strong measures, and prepared, if need should be, to follow them up effectually; whilst the chief bankers in London and the provinces rallied round him, under the sense of a common danger. This wise boldness had its due reward, for the 'panic' stage of the crisis was never reached. The plague was stayed, and the widespread ruin and misery that must otherwise have ensued was averted.

This chapter of our most recent commercial history is a tale with a most obvious moral. In fact, apart from the magnitude of the interests involved, the disaster was of the most ordinary type, such as every day overtakes some small speculator hasting to be rich. The conditions, indeed, of a commercial crisis are always with us. So far from being surprised when it arrives, we may well wonder why, under the present constitution of our money market, it occurs so seldom. We have an immense system of credit resting upon an utterly inadequate cash reserve. This is manifest, whether we consider the figures of our home and foreign trade, the liabilities of our banks, the annual income of the nation, or the financial operations of which our Clearing House accounts give evidence.

It is generally agreed that the deposits in the banks of the United Kingdom cannot be less than £600,000,000, most of this sum repayable in gold on demand. The London Clearing House totals reach the incredible amount of £7,000,000,000 annually. Now, if we confine our attention simply to the deposit liabilities of our banking institutions, the question arises, What provision is made for the liquidation of them? The answer is, that there exists in the United Kingdom only one considerable cash reserve. The smaller dealers in money all group themselves round the greatest dealer in money—namely, the Bank of England, and, at a time of pressure, they depend on the supply that can be

drawn from it. The provincial bankers in England, as well as the Scotch and Irish banks, have their spare cash with their agents in London, and the 'reserve' of these in turn is represented by their balances with the central institution. No doubt the banks in the metropolis and throughout the country have a certain amount of gold in hand for ordinary daily requirements; but to maintain this at a high level would interfere with profits. The function is, therefore, practically thrust upon one institution of keeping the gold reserve for all; and it is plainly impossible that this can be done adequately by any such arrangement. It is often forgotten that the Bank of England owes a duty not to the public alone, but also to its shareholders, who have a right to expect a fair return for their money. When the Bank pays a ten per cent. dividend, the return to a shareholder who has bought Bank Stock at recent prices is very little over three per cent. How, then, can it be demanded that the Bank of England shall assume the entire burden of maintaining a reserve for the benefit of all the banks in the country, some of which equal or even excel it in the amount of their deposits? We shall see, at all events, by a glance at the Bank Account published weekly, that the reserve is not equal to such a preposterous requirement. Let us take a very favourable specimen of these weekly accounts, that, namely, for the week ending Wednesday, the 3d December 1890, which stood as follows:

ISSUE DEPARTMENT.			
Notes issued.....	£40,213,030	Government Debt...£11,015,100	
		Other Securities....	5,434,900
		Gold Coin & Bullion	23,763,030
	£40,213,030		£40,213,030
BANKING DEPARTMENT.			
Proprietors' Capital	£14,553,000	Govern. Securities	£10,395,458
Reserve.....	3,212,890	Other Securities....	27,517,348
Public Deposits....	3,314,215	Notes.....	15,539,995
Other Deposits.....	35,312,792	Gold and Silver Coin	1,152,519
7-Day and other Bills	192,733		
	£54,585,620		£54,585,620

It is probable that to some readers who have examined this weekly statement from time to time, it has appeared somewhat puzzling. For the sake of any such we offer a brief explanation of it, and hope to show that there is nothing in it really difficult to understand.

It was an essential part of the arrangements made by Sir Robert Peel in the Bank Act of 1844 that the accounts of the two departments, the 'Issue' and the 'Banking,' should be kept distinct, as they stand above. The first item shows us that the total amount of Bank of England notes issued on the 3d December last was £40,213,030. This includes both those actually 'in circulation,' in the hands of the public, and those which, under the heading of 'Notes,' appear lower down in the assets of the Banking Department, the latter being treated, so far as Issue is concerned, as if it were an outside institution. The amounts on the other side of the Issue Account are regulated automatically, gold being held for every note issued over £16,450,000, this being the sum which under the Act the Bank are now entitled to issue against Government securities.

In the account of the 'Banking Department'

the first two items on the left-hand side are the Capital and the Rest; the latter consists of the undivided profits, and both together represent the liabilities of the Bank to its own shareholders. The other amounts on the same side represent the liabilities of the Bank to its customers, the Public Deposits being balances owing upon accounts of the Government and of various public bodies; the 'Other Deposits' the balances of mercantile firms and private persons, including the bankers; while the Seven-day and other Bills are really drafts or letters of credit outstanding.

Upon the credit side of the Banking Department account, the 'Other Securities' consist, of course, of discounted bills, advances upon securities, and various investments. But it is to the two items that remain, and the proportion they bear to the rest of the account, that the attention of the money market directs itself. For these, namely, the Notes and Coin in the Banking Department, form the Bank's 'Reserve,' gold being obtainable from the Issue Department in exchange for the Notes as required.

We see, then, that to meet the deposit liabilities of our banks and to form the cash basis of our immense system of credit, the Reserve on the 3d December last was no more than £16,672,814. It has also to be borne in mind that this amount largely exceeds the average, having been rapidly built up by extraordinary efforts on the part of the Bank in view of a possible catastrophe. Three millions of it had been obtained as a temporary loan from the Bank of France; a circumstance, by the way, which enabled the editors of all patriotic French newspapers to inform their readers that the savings of Frenchmen, lent with a generosity possible only to that great nation, had saved England from universal bankruptcy! A further great sum had been obtained from Russia; so that the Reserve of that date cannot be regarded as normal. But supposing it were maintained at the point then reached, the disproportion is so vast between its amount and the functions it is intended to fulfil as to be positively alarming. We are balancing the financial pyramid upon its apex. This is the reason why our money market is so extremely sensitive, and why the movements of the rate of discount in London are more frequent and more violent than in any other European capital. 'Since January 1883 the number of changes in Germany have been twenty, which compares with seven in France, and sixty-two in England.' (*Our Gold Reserves*. By C. Gairdner, LL.D.) It would not matter so much if these rapid alterations in the discount rate affected only the operations of speculative finance, but they throw out the calculations of merchants and traders generally, and are a troublesome burden to our commerce. It is for the same reason, also, that a noticeable decrease in the Reserve of the Bank of England has frequently been the immediate starting-point of a panic; most naturally, when the only considerable store of ready-money in the country is being heavily trencned upon.

Our commerce and finance are founded upon credit. The meaning of a Crisis is, that the credit system has been seriously undermined and threatens collapse. As credit is 'the disposition of one man to trust another,' the time of danger arrives when from any cause a contrary disposi-

tion begins to prevail. For it is certain that when it does prevail, the attempt will be made to restrict credit transactions and to substitute cash for promises to pay. The position at such a moment is simply that merchants suspect and distrust others, and fear that similar suspicion may be attaching to themselves. It follows that they call in, wherever possible, the debts due to them, and strain every nerve to provide the means of meeting those which they owe. The apprehension on every side is that it may not be practicable to obtain the necessary command of ready-money. When a great shock to credit occurs, such as the failure of an important bank or mercantile house, experience has shown that the immediate consequence is a determination of all to protect themselves, a determination which makes itself felt in a heavy drain upon the cash Reserve. Experience has shown further that when this mood rises to panic, the demands for cash speedily outrun the immediately available supply. The weapon employed by those whose duty it is to protect the Reserve is to raise the rate of discount to a high point, thus making money dear and checking any demand for it which is not absolutely imperative. When there is sufficient time to allow the full effect of this corrective to be felt, the crisis gradually solves itself by natural means. Speculation is arrested, and trade restricted; the prices of all articles tend to fall; goods being cheaper, the exportation of them is increased; the foreign exchanges become favourable to this country, and capital flows back to us.

But sometimes the panic stage arrives too suddenly. It has happened more than once within the last half-century that the raising of the rate proved too feeble a weapon, and the drain has continued until the whole of the Bank's reserve has been exhausted. Upon these occasions resort was had to means that may be called extra-legal. With the permission of the Government, usually signified by letter from the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the restriction on the issue of Bank of England notes was removed, and an additional supply was thereby provided of what everybody recognised as money.

It is a remarkable circumstance in connection with such a crisis in financial and commercial affairs as has just been described, that it seems to arrive at regular intervals. Taking this year of grace 1890 and going back through the century, we find that every ten or eleven years or thereabouts there was a crisis of more or less intensity; for 1878, 1866, 1857, 1847, 1836-39, 1825-26, and 1815 were all of them marked by special commercial disturbance. There is a reason for this periodicity. The movement of trade is not a steady onward march, a rapid or slow but continuous progress; it is rather a tide which advances and recedes, a tide which requires a number of years for its full ebb and flow. Supposing we take as a starting-point a season when the harvest has been very abundant. The difference which an unusually good harvest makes to the prosperity of the country amounts to very many millions of money; but only after the lapse of years will its effects be fully realised by the entire community. At first sight it seems as if only farmers and landlords should benefit by it, but

no great advantage ever falls to any large interest in the country, of which in the end all classes do not obtain some share. Not only are the extra profits of agriculture used to purchase manufactured articles and articles of merchandise, but the reduced cost of agricultural produce leaves a margin in the hands of the people which is expended in the same manner, and thus industries of every kind are stimulated and become prosperous in their turn. It is evident that this must be a gradual process; and *vice versa*, the same is true of unproductive and unprofitable seasons.

We have to keep in view, further, that years of unusual prosperity or adversity do not as a rule come singly, but in groups. The effect, therefore, is cumulative; and if there is a cycle in commercial affairs, we ought to expect that it can only be completed within a period of years.

It is when the tide of prosperity is flowing most freely that the conditions of a calamitous crisis are prepared. So long as the profits of agriculture and trade remain low, so long as the industries of the country do little more than maintain their footing without much prospect of improvement, there is little danger of any great catastrophe. A cautious and thrifty spirit prevails at such a time, and whatever surplus may be realised is carefully husbanded. But when plentiful seasons follow each other, when trade becomes active and profitable, and savings accumulate, a change comes over the spirit of commerce and finance. Capital is then outgrowing the amount which can be profitably used in the normal expansion of business. There is always a margin in the national income which remains unused and is seeking investment. The amount of this margin in our country is now reckoned at about £200,000,000 a year. This is so much added to the capital which is ready to be invested in any promising enterprise. It may be affirmed generally that this capital at all times exceeds what can be absorbed by really sound and profitable undertakings. We may take this to be now the permanent condition of things, but it is greatly aggravated when a long period of growing prosperity has been reached. Then occurs what ought not to be difficult to foresee—the demand for channels of investment creates its own supply. A mania for speculation sets in, and capital is freely expended—it may be upon enterprises of great permanent value; or it may be—for it seems very much a matter of chance—upon unsound and even ridiculous projects. It is seldom indeed that this investing and speculating mood, engendered by cheap money and the feeling of general prosperity, can be restrained within reasonable bounds; seldom that it does not outrun them so far as to bring financial troubles and disasters.

The recent Crisis is not hard to be accounted for, consistently with the theory that has just been explained. One important feature peculiar to it should not be forgotten. Mr Goschen reduced the interest upon Consols to two and three-quarters per cent., an operation which he performed with a skill and success that seem very astounding when we consider the price to which the new stock has since fallen. As an inevitable result of that reduction, much of the money hitherto invested in Consols has sought other channels. An active demand had already for some

time been in existence for new securities, and a stimulus which was little needed was thus given to it. The new securities were forthcoming, in the shape of mines, brewery companies, financial trusts, and the loans and enterprises of foreign states. Amongst those who were ready to supply the demand for new securities to any extent was the government of the Argentine Republic, which, besides the amounts they borrowed for purely governmental purposes, freely issued guarantees to railway and other great undertakings in their territory. The nominal value of Argentine securities in Europe of all sorts—national, provincial, and municipal obligations, together with Cédulas, railway and other stocks—is said to approach £200,000,000.

There are no doubt great natural resources in the Argentine territory, but it must be said that the rate at which these securities have been poured into the European money market is eloquent of the extravagance which characterises governments that are unstable and reckless of the future.

Of the Crisis of 1890 the lesson most emphatically taught was the old one, to let caution and thorough knowledge be our constant guides in all financial affairs.

## DUMARESQ'S DAUGHTER.

### CHAPTER V.—A MODERN STOIC.

To Psyche Dumaresq it was a matter of much internal questioning next day why on earth her father had invited that charming Mr Linnell to dinner. A dinner-party, on however humble a scale, at the Wren's Nest was an almost unheard-of novelty. And then, besides, her father had spoken to her somewhat slightly of Mr Linnell only the day before yesterday. What could he mean now by this sudden change of front? Why thus incontinently break through all the established rules of that Spartan household, and invite a perfect stranger to a lordly banquet? The thing was really little short of a miracle.

But Psyche would have been even more astonished still if only she could have known the cause of the change in her father's demeanour. It was a chance word dropped by Mansel in the course of conversation, implying that Linnell, for all his studious simplicity of dress and manner, had a good deal more money than he ever pretended to. Within all Psyche's previous experience, a man's possession of money, especially as fixed and certain income, had always to her father been a positive reason for not desiring the honour of his acquaintance. 'I dislike the society of men who don't earn their own living,' he used to say in his quiet restrained way. 'The necessity for work is the great humaniser. Those who toil not, neither do they spin, can have but very imperfect sympathies, after all, with those who earn their own livelihood by the sweat of their brow. I'm not prejudiced against money, but I find moneyed folk generally distasteful to me. They may be very nice people in their own circle; but I don't care to let them intersect mine. I feel most at home

among my brother-workers.' If Psyche could have known, therefore, the real reason why her father had invited Linnell to dine with them, her astonishment would indeed have reached its zenith.

As it was, however, she contented herself with making the very best preparations the house could afford for the little entertainment that magical evening; and whatever her dinner lacked in delicacies it certainly more than made up in delicacy; for the flowers were of Psyche's own dainty arrangement, and the fruit was plucked from Psyche's own little garden, and the silk-wrought strip down the centre of the tablecloth had been stitched with that pretty arabesque pattern by Psyche's own pretty and deft little fingers.

When Linnell arrived, he was shown alone into the tiny drawing-room, and he had some minutes to himself to examine its contents before either Psyche or her father came down to receive him. The young man's respect for the author of the *Encyclopædic Philosophy* gave a profound interest in his eyes to every detail in that small and severely furnished room. Most of the furniture, indeed, at least whatever had any pretence to rank as a luxury, had been made by Haviland Dumaresq's own hands, and bore the impress of his stern and strictly stoical taste. On the carved oak over-mantel—two plain wooden slabs, supported by pillars of Ionic simplicity—lay an uncut copy of the Japanese translation of Dumaresq's great monumental work, with a framed photograph of a spare face, bearing beneath the simple inscription, 'John Stuart Mill, to Haviland Dumaresq.' The plain table by the window was covered with pamphlets, letters, and papers: Linnell took up casually the topmost of the lot, and saw at a glance it was a German dissertation 'On Certain Side-Aspects of the Dumaresquian Philosophy,' by two well-known Professors at Bonn and Heidelberg. The next was a controversial religious work by a Polish Archbishop, 'On Rationalistic Ethics, and especially on the Dumaresquian Law of Reciprocity.' By their side lay a paper-covered Italian volume, bearing in its upper left-hand corner the manuscript words, 'A Haviland Dumaresq, Hommage de l'Auteur.' Linnell glanced carelessly at the envelopes on the table. One of them was franked with a Chilean stamp; the other had printed across its top in blue letters, 'Bureau of Indian Affairs, Washington.' The gold medal that hung on the wall was the decoration of the Académie des Sciences at Paris: the diploma rolled up on the bookcase beyond conferred the degree of Doctor of Laws of the University of Vienna. And this was the man, known over the whole civilised world, who toiled hard for his daily bread in that tiny cottage at publishers' hackwork! This was the man whom Mrs Maitland, in the comfortable villa on the hill-side opposite, had complacently classed, in her local ignorance, with the postman poet!

Linnell's heart beat higher as he thought that by unobtrusive means he might yet be able to redress in part this great wrong of our money-grubbing society, and repay directly to Haviland Dumaresq some fraction of the debt which the world owed him. The list from his agent's would arrive no doubt to-morrow morning, and Havi-



land Dumaresq would go to bed next evening (though he knew it not), a couple of hundred pounds or so the richer for the information. And that would be but the beginning of Linnell's work. He would not rest, he declared to himself with fervour, till Haviland Dumaresq, that greatest of thinkers, enjoyed the ease he deserved so richly.

As he turned to examine the books on the shelves—most of them works on philosophy or science, with flattering inscriptions from their authors on the title-page—the door opened, and Psyche entered. Linnell turned round and took her hand gracefully. If he had looked handsome before in his flannels and tennis suit, he looked still handsomer now in evening dress and with a slightly-faded blue passion-flower stuck with tender care in his left button-hole. Psyche's quick eyes recognised that delicate blossom at once. 'Why, that's one of our own, Mr Linnell,' she said, half startled. 'Did you pick it from the plant at the door as you came in, then?'

Linnell looked down at it with a hesitating glance. 'Well, no,' he said. 'The fact is, Miss Dumaresq, it's a present I've received. I was given it by a lady. Miss Maitland wore it at dinner last night.—But,' he added quickly, as Psyche's face fell most unmistakably at that simple announcement, 'she told me it was you who'd given it to her, and I kept it accordingly as a little memento. I would prize anything that came from Haviland Dumaresq's cottage.'

'Let me get you another,' Psyche said, if only to hide her blushes. 'That one's withered.' And she put her hand out of the open window as she spoke, and pulled a blossom from the creeper that looked in at the mullions of the casement.

'Thank you,' Linnell answered, taking it from her with a certain picturesque awkwardness of manner. 'I shall keep them both.' And he folded the old one reverently as he spoke in a letter he drew from his waistcoat pocket. So much devotion to philosophy is rare; but Haviland Dumaresq was a man in a century—and Psyche was also a girl of a thousand.

They sat and talked with the constrained self-consciousness of youth and maiden for a few minutes, for Linnell was almost as shrinking as Psyche herself, and then Haviland Dumaresq entered to relieve them from their unwilling tête-à-tête. He was dressed in a very old and worn evening suit, yet carefully brushed and well preserved: his shirt front and tie were of the whitest and neatest, and the keen gray eyes and grizzled beard showed even more distinctly than ever—so Linnell thought—the vigour and power of that marvellous brain that lay behind the massive and beetling-browed forehead. He bowed with all his usual stately courtliness to the young painter. 'I hope Psyche has been doing her duty as hostess?' the great man said in that clear and ringing silvery voice of his. 'I've kept you waiting, I'm afraid; but the fact is, I overwrote my time, working at the new chapters on Dissimulation of Verbal Roots; and forgot to dress till twenty past seven. A mind much occupied with internal relations is apt to let external relations slip by unnoticed. You must have observed that yourself, no doubt, in painting.'

'Papa has always to be called two or three times over to every meal,' Psyche put in, laughing. 'And whenever I make a *soufflé* or anything of that sort, I always call him ten minutes beforehand, or else, you know, it's all gone flat before he comes out of his study to eat it.'

Just at that moment, the Mansels arrived, and the whole party went in to dinner.

In spite of the bare little dining-room, and the one servant who acted alike as cook and parlour-maid, no dinner was ever prettier or better. It was simple, of course, and of few dishes: you can't expect much from a one-handed menage; but it bore the impress of a refined household, for all that: it had the nameless charm of perfect gracefulness, which is often wanting to the most sumptuous London entertainments. Linnell felt sure that Psyche had prepared most of it herself beforehand. The pudding was a cold one, and so was the mayonnaise of boiled fish; so that the one servant had nothing to look after in the kitchen but the clear soup and the one small joint. These details of the hidden domestic management, indeed, Linnell appreciated at once from his old African bachelor experience. But everything was dainty, light, and tempting: even the wine, though but a simple claret, was sound and old and of a choice vintage. Haviland Dumaresq's own conversation with Mrs Mansel would alone have made any entertainment go off pleasantly. In his stately way, the old man, when once warmed up to talk, could fire off epigram after epigram in quick succession; and when he met a clever woman, who could toss him back the ball as fast as he delivered it, the game between them was well worth watching. Now, Ida Mansel was a clever woman, with just that particular gift of bandying back rapid question and answer which Dumaresq loved as intellectual recreation; and Linnell was content to sit and listen to those two brisk disputants at their mimic conflict for half the evening, with only an occasional aside to Psyche, or a casual remark to his brother-painter. For Haviland Dumaresq's wit was keen and sharp as his thought was profound; and the contest of words with a pretty woman always stimulated his faculties to their very utmost, and brought out the flashing qualities of his vivid mind in the highest perfection.

After dinner, however, when Psyche and Mrs Mansel had left the table, their conversation fell into a very different channel. A man who meets for the first time in his life one of his pet heroes, likes to make the best of his opportunities by learning as much as he possibly can about the living object of his admiration. Linnell admired Haviland Dumaresq far too profoundly not to be eagerly interested in every detail of his life and history. And Dumaresq, for his part, though he seldom talked of his own affairs, for he was the exact opposite of an egoist—too much absorbed in the world of things to give much of his attention to that solitary unit of humanity, himself—yet broke loose for once, in the presence of one who loved his System, and in a certain grand, impersonal, unostentatious sort of way, gave a brief account of the gradual stages by which that System rose up step after step to

full-grown maturity before his mental vision. Linnell listened with all the silent and attentive awe of a disciple as the old man related, bit by bit, how that wonderful conception of the nature of things took gradual concrete shape within him.

'You must have lived a very hard life while you were gathering together the materials for your great work,' the painter ventured to remark at last, as Dumaresq, pausing, raised his glass of claret to his lips to moisten his throat after the graphic recital. 'It must have taken you years and years to collect them.'

The old man gazed across at him with a sharp glance from those keen clear eyes. 'You are right,' he said impressively: 'years and years indeed it took me. For five-and-twenty years I did nothing else but master the infinite mass of detail, the endless facts and principles which went to form the groundwork of the Encyclopædic Philosophy. When I left Cambridge, now long more than forty years ago, I made up my mind to devote my life without stint or reserve to the prosecution of that single purpose. I meant to spend myself freely on the work. The goal shone already clear as day in the heavens before me; but I knew that in order to work my plan out in all its fullness I must give up at least ten years of my time to the prosecution of multifarious physical researches. The thing grew as such things always necessarily grow. Before I'd arrived at the preliminary mastery of facts which I felt to be indispensable for the development of my clue, I'd given up a full quarter of a century to the mere task of prior preparation. Then I said to myself my tutelage was over: I might begin to live. I wrote my first volume at once, and I also married. My work was done, all but to write it down. I thought I was justified in taking a little care, for the first time in my life, of my own comfort.'

'But if it isn't a rude question,' Linnell cried, all aglow with the reflected fervour of the old man's speech, 'how did you manage to live meanwhile, during the years you gave up to that long preparation?'

Haviland Dumaresq smiled grimly. 'Like a dog,' he answered with simple force: 'like a dog in a kennel. Wherever I was—in London, Paris, Berlin, Washington—for I followed my clue over Europe and America—I took myself a room in the workman's quarter, as near as possible to the British Museum, or the Bibliothèque Nationale, or the Smithsonian Institute, or wherever else my chief scene of labour lay; and there I lived on bread and cheese and beer, or sometimes less, for years together, while I was working and collecting and observing and arranging. When I look back upon the past, I wonder at it myself. A certain vivid apostolic energy bore me up then. It has evaporated now, and I've become luxurious. But I started in life with exactly fifteen hundred pounds. From the very outset I invested my money, and drawing the interest that accrued each year, I sold out the principal from time to time, to live upon my capital, according as I wanted it. At first, the draughts upon the prime fund were long between; but as years went by and my capital decreased, I had to sell out more and more frequently.

Saving and starving the hardest I could starve, sovereign by sovereign, it seemed to slip by me. I gave up the beer; I gave up the cheese; if I could I would have given up the bread itself, I believe, but in spite of all it still slipped by me. At last, to my utter despair, I found myself one day reduced to my last fifty pounds, while I had still at least five years of solid work staring me in the face unperformed before me. Then I almost gave up all for lost. I fainted in the wilderness. As I sat alone that morning in a fireless room at mid December I hid my face in my hands and cried out in my misery. I asked myself why I should continue this task, no man compelling and no man thanking me for it; why I should shut myself out from home and wife and friends and children, and all that other men have always held dearest, for pure love of that vague abstraction, science. I almost gave up out of sheer despondency.'

'And what did you do at last?' Linnell asked, deeply interested.

'For a time I hardly knew what to do. I told my philosophic acquaintances (for I had a few in London) the whole facts of the case; and some of them asked me to come and dine with them, and some of them said it was very hard lines, and some of them proposed to make a fund to help me. But I wouldn't hear of that: even for Philosophy's sake, I was far too proud to accept alms from any man. I nearly broke down with anxiety and despair. Mill made interest for me with your kinsman, old Sir Austen Linnell, who had then charge of the Foreign Office; and Sir Austen tempted me with the offer of a consulship in Peru, which I almost accepted. So broken-hearted was I that I almost accepted it. Six hundred a year, and collateral advantages. For once in my life the filthy lucre for a moment tempted me. But just at that instant, that critical instant, as luck would have it, an old uncle of mine in America died unexpectedly—a poor man, but he left me his savings, some six hundred pounds, all told; and it just pulled me through: it gave me the precise respite I needed. Six hundred pounds was wealth untold to me. I went to work again with redoubled vigour, and spent it every penny for the sake of the System. At the end of five years I sat down a beggar, but with the first volume of my precious book in good black print on my knees before me.'

Linnell drew a long breath. 'To you, Mansel,' he said, turning round to his friend, 'I suppose this is all an old, old story; but as for me, who hear it to-night for the first time, why, it fairly takes my breath away. I call it nothing short of heroic.'

Mansel shook his head. 'It's as new to me, my dear fellow, as to you,' he answered in a low voice. 'Dumaresq has never before this evening told me a single word about it.'

The old philosopher sighed profoundly. 'What use?' he said, with a gesture of deprecation. 'Why trouble our heads about so small a matter? The universe swarms and teems with worlds around us. We men are but parasites on the warped surface of a tiny satellite of a tenth-rate sun, set in the midst of a boundless cosmos, whose depths are everywhere pregnant with problems. Why should we go out of our way, I wonder, to wring our hands over this fly or that: to discuss

the history of any particular individual small parasite among us? The book got done at last: that's the great thing. The world at large may not care to look at it; but there it is, in evidence to this day, the monument of a lifetime, a germ of intellectual yeast cast loose into the fermenting thought of humanity, and slowly but surely assimilating to itself all suitable particles in that vast mass of inane and clashing atoms.'

They paused a moment, and gazed hard at their glasses. Dumaresq's earnestness held them spell-bound. Linnell was the first to break the solemn silence. 'It was a noble life,' he said, 'nobly wasted.'

To their immense astonishment, Haviland Dumaresq made answer energetically: 'Ay, wasted indeed! There you say true. Utterly, inexpressibly, irretrievably wasted! and therein lies the sting of the whole story. If I had it all to live over again, of course, I'd waste it as freely a second time—I can't help that: nature has built me so that I must turn perforce to philosophy and science, and spill the wine of my life for the advancement of thought as naturally as the moth flies into the candle or the lemming drowns itself in the bays of the Baltic. But wasted it is, as you say, for all that. Now that I'm old, and can look down calmly from the pinnacle of age on the import of life, I see that the world itself is wiser in its generation than any one among its wayward children. The general intelligence, from which all individual intelligence derives itself, runs deeper and truer than any man's personality. The way of the world is the best way in the end if we only had the sense to see it. *Si jeunesse savait, ou si vieillesse pouvait*, is the sum and substance of all experience. If I had my life to live over again, I'd live it as I've lived it, mistakes and all, I don't doubt, because it's the natural and inevitable outcome of my own perverse and unhappy idiosyncrasy. Philosophy lures me as gin lures drunks. But if I had to advise any other person, any young man or woman beginning life with high ideals and noble aspirations, I'd say to them without hesitation: "The world is wisest. Go the way of the world and do as the world does. Don't waste your life as I've wasted mine. Work for the common, vulgar, low, personal aims—money, position, fame, power. Those alone are solid. Those alone are substantial. Those alone make your life worth having to yourself. All the rest is empty, empty, empty, empty. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, except the vain things mean men wisely and meanly strive for."

There was a long pause, and no one said anything. That awful cry of a bruised and broken spirit took their hearts by surprise. But through the closed door, the murmur of Psyche's voice in the drawing-room could be heard distinctly. The old man listened to it and smiled serenely. The cloud that had brooded over his forehead cleared away. Then he rose, and going to a hanging cupboard above the mantel-shelf took out a small round box, and from it brought forth a little silver-coated pellet. 'It excites my nerves when I talk this way,' he said apologetically, as he washed the medicine down with half a glass of claret. 'I always require something to still my brain after speaking on these purely personal

matters—they rouse the glands to unnatural activity.—Mansel, will you have another glass of wine?—No? Then suppose we join your wife and Psyche?'

## SECOND-HAND BOOKSELLING.

By the majority of the general public, the calling of a dealer in old and rare books is looked upon as a curious kind of pursuit, somewhat on a par with other 'second-hand' businesses—old clothes, for example, or broken-down furniture. Even among men of culture, there lurks a leaven of disdain for a trade which in reality more nearly approaches to a profession than almost any other—that is, of course, when properly carried out. Many people fancy that the sole requirements are a shop, a few bundles of books picked up at a sale, a bench outside and a box or two. Some, indeed, start with no more, and scrape along in a fashion; but they are far removed from what is properly understood by 'second-hand book-selling.'

Few beyond the ranks of the craft rightly appreciate the many qualities needed in this interesting and intellectual calling, but, like most that are interesting and intellectual, inadequately remunerative. Why is it that the lucrativeness of an occupation is, as a rule, in inverse ratio to the mental qualifications it demands? It is the butcher, the publican, the linen-draper, who grow rich and leave colossal fortunes. How many booksellers do more than make a decent living? Of course, food, drink, and clothing are necessities; literature, a luxury; yet it seems a trifle unjust that a man should make thousands cutting up sheep, when one engaged in work which demands high and varied attainments wears brain and body for ridiculously small recompense.

Let us consider for a moment what these necessary qualifications are. Retentive and accurate memory; a more than superficial knowledge of history and, of course, literature; acquaintance with modern languages, and certainly with Latin; finally, a certain appreciation of books, hard to define, in reality intuitive, and perhaps but rarely found—a gift which seems to enable the possessor to distinguish in some mysterious manner between an unfamiliar book of value and one that is worthless. To some extent it may therefore be said that the second-hand bookseller is born and not made. There are members of the trade who owe their success chiefly to the possession of this faculty; others who add thereto the acquired merits enumerated above, and these are the model representatives of a worthy and undervalued body. Perhaps an equable temper should have been included in the list, as surely few people have to submit to more irritating ignorance and presumption in the course of their business. The bores who worry them take several shapes. Most persistent and wearisome is the ubiquitous collector 'in search of information.' Perhaps it is hardly fair to class him with the collectors, as he hardly ever buys anything. He will enter the shop with an inquiry as to the price of a book in the window, merely as an

excuse to pave the way to a deluge of questions. 'What is the value of so-and-so?' 'How much ought I to give for such and such a book?' 'Is the first edition of —'s poems worth anything?' and so on 'ad infinitum,' unless stopped, though that is no easy matter, and can frequently be effected only by downright rudeness. What often makes his conduct worse is, that after eliciting a quotation as to the value of a certain work, he will produce the very volume from his pocket and almost insist on its being purchased at the price named. Sometimes he will proceed to a neighbour, armed with the insidiously acquired information, and drive a capital bargain for some chance-bought rarity.

It must be admitted that such persons constitute an injustice to a tradesman. What enables the latter to carry on his business but the knowledge of his goods and their value, and why should he be expected to give away that knowledge any more than the goods themselves? In the case of a dealer in rare books this argument has peculiar force. With him it is so essentially a question of superior knowledge, gained by years of patient attention, that marks the difference between the man who sells and the public who buy. It is as reasonable to ask for a volume off his shelves as for the painfully-acquired information as to their values or dates. At least the questioner might offer to make a purchase; but this proceeding is, as a rule the furthest from his thoughts. He generally wants to know something 'for a friend' in the country, which hypothetical acquaintance is held up as a bait to the bookseller as a 'possible' future customer. There are no more persistent and provoking people than the members of this wearisome fraternity. 'Age does not stale, nor custom change their infinite'—impudence; neglect, coldness, nay, even often insult, scarcely serve to deter them from their malicious sport. If, perchance, one should scan these lines, let him remember that what may be amusement to him is something far different to the harassed dealer, who has quite enough to occupy his attention without fulfilling the onerous duties of a literary Inquiry Office.

Bores of another class are those sanguine individuals who have imaginary rarities to dispose of. From town and from country they wait upon the bookseller with volumes, generally bulky, respecting whose value they have formed the most exaggerated notions. They are particularly fertile in old Bibles, especially after some great book-sale of sufficient importance to be recorded by the press, and in which has occurred, say, a 'Mazarin' or 'Cranmer,' realising some enormous sum. The countryman, radiant in his Sunday best, makes his appearance weighted with a huge parcel.

'I've got a very ancient Bible to sell. It's more than two hundred years old. I see as how an old Bible sold for a thousand pounds t'other day; don't suppose this is worth so much as that quite; but I thought I'd like to turn it into money. 'Tain't no good to me, bein' so very old. Over two hundred years.' And so on.

'Yes; very well; let me see it.'

The parcel being opened, one discovers a very dilapidated copy of a very worthless edition, minus, probably, such trifles as the title-page

and sundry leaves at the end—honest value when perfect, twelve shillings; as presented, nothing at all. It is an almost pitiful task to break this to the eagerly expectant possessor, already reveling in the anticipated benefit of the many sovereigns he deemed his prize to represent. Yet it has to be done; and he goes his way, probably to another shop, with a poor opinion of his first adviser's sanity, and only giving up hope when a succession of such experiences has taught him the bitter truth. These are but two specimens of the nuisances booksellers have to put up with, and that almost daily. Is it surprising that an even temper should have been cited as one of their necessary gifts?

Booksellers' catalogues have frequently been the object of somewhat contemptuous jocularly on the part of gentlemen whose time seems to be chiefly occupied in writing to *Notes and Queries* and other literary papers. Perhaps some day one will be found with the grace to say a good word for these publications, and to acknowledge the indebtedness readers and collectors are frequently under to the varied information about books contained in many of the periodical lists issued by painstaking firms. We have heard a good deal about the stupid mistakes which crop up now and then, without regard being had to the many advantages which the general accuracy of catalogues affords to readers. Let justice be done to the carefully-prepared notes and descriptions to be found plentifully scattered through many catalogues which could be named, the outcome of considerable work and laborious research, far in excess of what the uninitiated would consider necessary to be bestowed on ephemeral publications of this kind. Dates have to be verified, facts referred to, perhaps a precedent found for price, and in many cases a condensed account of the volume and its contents given. All this requires more than mere labour—tact, education, literary skill, and immense perseverance.

The profits made by second-hand booksellers are popularly supposed to be abnormally great. In many cases, no doubt, a good 'haul' is made, entirely due, by-the-by, to the knowledge possessed by the dealer, which enables him to make the most of a bargain; but it is only just that these large profits should occur now and then, first, to repay him for the valuable time he has been forced to expend in gaining the necessary experience; and secondly, to provide to some extent a reserve fund against one of the most curious features in this business, the extraordinary fluctuations in the value of stock. Old books may be said to be worth just what they will fetch, and that is best represented by  $x$ , an unknown quantity. There are so many contingencies. Fashion, which decrees that certain works shall go up in price this year, to drop as rapidly the next. The conditions of sale, a most important point, for, as is well known, books from a good library will often realise twice or three times as much at auction as the identical volumes if offered under ordinary circumstances. Consequently, no dealer is absolutely certain of his assets. He cannot truthfully say, 'My stock is worth so much,' because he gave the sum named for it. Let him try to realise by the usual channel, the auction-room, and the books may perhaps fetch half their cost. Of course, on the



other hand they might bring a profit. This is an experience, however, which very few of the craft have ever been subjected to. In proof of these assertions, take, for instance, a recent craze, that for first editions of Charles Dickens's works. A year or two back, anything and everything, good, bad, or indifferent, shabby copies and the choicest 'uncut' examples were eagerly sought for and bought up. Now, although fine copies of this author's works command a high and always increasing price, poor copies are comparatively a drug in the market; nobody wants them, or only at a very low figure. Such instances might easily be multiplied, proving what a large element of speculation enters into this business.

But, with all its drawbacks, the trade of second-hand bookselling remains an attractive, interesting, and cultured calling. If all its members do not fulfil the requirements and duties completely, that does not detract from the merits of a most intellectual and commendable pursuit.

## STRANGE FRIENDS.

A STORY OF THE NORTH-WEST.

### CHAPTER IV.

DIGBY ROCKINGHAM made no effort to run counter to Brock's strangely but strongly expressed wishes. After due deliberation, he judged that it would be far better for himself and for the community at large if he stayed away from Gravenhurst for a time at least.

All through the rest of the summer the missionary clergyman pursued the even tenor of his way, sticking doggedly to his work in the face of difficulties and set-backs that would have discouraged and disheartened many a man of stouter nerve and greater physical strength. And all through that same summer Brock and his erratic sweetheart still remained unmarried.

Before the winter set in, an unexpected event occurred; and about the 1st of November the busy hive of workers at the Gravenhurst mines were suddenly scattered to the four winds of heaven. Little Pig with some other Indians and half-breeds had been off on a 'whisky spree,' visiting a tribe of dirty red men on Lake Nepigon. On their return, these revellers just managed to drag themselves into Gravenhurst, finding their way to some out-buildings in the vicinity of the mine office, where they threw themselves down, sick of the smallpox. Now, when smallpox attacks an Indian, or any one else, in a severe climate the disease fastens itself upon him in its most virulent and repulsive form. Without telephone or telegraph, the news spread like wildfire through the neighbourhood that five Indians were down with smallpox at Gravenhurst; the result being that twenty-four hours later, notwithstanding the limited means of locomotion, there were literally not a score of souls, all told, within walking distance of the copper mines.

Amid the excitement of the general exodus, Rockingham stayed at his post. He scarcely knew who remained of his recent neighbours until he looked about him a little. He then discovered that Dugald M'Dougall was still at

Kincardine, and also that Martha Seagrave, the schoolmistress, had not yet gone.

'What is to be done?' asked Rockingham of the Justice.

'Well, noo, if it's only Injuns, it'll not matter a great deal, Colonel. We maun just bide a wee and keep quiet. If the infection don't spread, not much harm will come. I don't believe in scares.'

'But, my dear sir, you don't intend to let the poor wretches die without assistance, surely?'

'I do not—that is to say, not if I can get the Government surgeon from Fort William to attend them. I shall go over by the next stage and give the information officially, though doubtless the news has reached there before this.'

The stage started the next morning, and the Scotchman occupied the seat by the driver. He could not, under the most favourable conditions, expect to be back before evening of the third day, by which time the pest-smitten Indians would undoubtedly be dead.

After M'Dougall's departure, the clergyman paced for a long time the wooden side-walk of the short village street. He was thinking over the situation, considering what could be done for the sick wretches, and wondering if Brock and Madge Latimer had gotten safely away. Rockingham had patrolled the rough boards for nearly two hours, when a hideous old squaw approached him and thrust a scrap of paper into his hand. He knew from whom the missive came before he opened it, for it was a leaf torn from a pocket-book that he had frequently seen in Eli Brock's possession. He unfolded it quickly, and found scrawled upon the paper, in shaky characters, these words:

COLONEL—I'm sending for you now. If you're white still, come quick, for God's sake, to my room at the office. ELL

Without waiting a single moment, Rockingham started off afoot for Gravenhurst, where he arrived in less than half an hour. He was much impressed by the death-like stillness of the place, for there was not a living soul in sight, where but a day or two before more than a hundred men had been busily at work. He passed by the huge piles of ore, and noticed that the door of the engine-room stood wide open, disclosing more vividly the quietness within. He entered the building known as 'the office,' but as no one either greeted or challenged him, he went on up-stairs. The door of Brock's sleeping-apartment stood ajar, and through the aperture Rockingham could perceive the foreman stretched upon his bed. Even at that distance it was plain to see that Brock was deathly sick—that he was down with the smallpox.

'Stop!' said Brock in a hoarse whisper.

'It is I—Rockingham,' replied his visitor.

'Yes, I know. But listen, Colonel. I've got it—you know—the smallpox. If you're skeered, or if there's anybody you care for, and don't want to run no risks, keep out!'

'I am not afraid, Brock,' said the clergyman. 'If you need aid or assistance of any kind, that is what I am here for. Are you very ill?'

'I'm right bad, and I'm getting worse.—Get me a drink, Colonel, just a little drink; I hain't supped water since this time yesterday.'

As Rockingham brought the desired drink, he asked: 'Where is—er—your—'

'My best girl, eh? Madge? Ha, ha! She's a dandy, she is!'

The poor fellow laughed horribly as he said these words; and then, lowering his voice to a whisper, he added: 'Say, Colonel, I was a trifle hard on you, and you behaved like a brick. Madge played you dirt, didn't she? She made you suffer some, didn't she? Well, she's done the same by me. She's played me dirt all through the piece, and last night she and her folks went off with the crowd, leaving me—almost her husband, as you might say—to suffer like this.' And he wound up with an execration.

'Hush!' said Rockingham soothingly.

'I know, Colonel, them's hard words, but they're merited. You'll never hear me say 'em of her again; I'm through with her. What's the outlook?'

Although Brock talked in a sort of off-hand style, it was only in a low tone of voice; for he was very weak, and, as he himself had said, he was growing worse.

The visitor busied himself by making the sick man more comfortable in his bed as he replied: 'M'Dougall has gone for a doctor. Until they arrive, I will take good care of you, Brock, and will try to pull you through. I flatter myself I am a tolerably good nurse.—Who is looking after those poor Indian fellows?'

'They don't need no looking after, Colonel. Every last one of 'em died yesterday—so that old squaw, who came in here to thief, told me.'

'Well, well, poor wretches!—Now, Brock, you will have to be very still and very patient. You cannot be moved; but I will nurse you here. Please God, I will see you through this.'

Suddenly Brock fell to crying like a child. 'Colonel,' he said, 'it ain't for me to say "God bless you," but I hope He will. You're *white* clear through; you're the whitest feller as I ever run against!'

All through the tedious days that followed, Rockingham did everything that was done at the settlement. With the old squaw to help him, he buried the pest-stricken corpses of the Indians. He refused to allow Martha Seagrave to visit Gravenhurst; but he pressed her into the service as cook and laundry-maid with headquarters at M'Dougall's hotel.

It was five days before the Justice returned, and then he came alone, the Government surgeon being on leave of absence. So Rockingham had to continue his work well nigh single-handed, and for three weeks he watched over poor Brock day and night. Fortunately, the disease did not spread, and no new cases came to light. But Rockingham, frail and fragile as he was, himself fell a victim to the dread scourge; and when, at the end of a month, Brock, thin and very weak, but recovered, stood upon his feet once more, his faithful nurse was lying at 'the office' in the throes of deadly disease.

Martha Seagrave's opportunity had now arrived.

All through Brock's sickness she had longed to relieve Rockingham in nursing the foreman, and it was only the clergyman's stern and positive denial which had prevented her from sharing his dangerous and wearing labour. Now that Rockingham was himself laid low, there was no one to drive her from the sick-room. Brock was altogether too weak, and the Justice offered but very slight remonstrance. The old Scotchman, who had more than once fearlessly confronted hostile Indians and angry trappers, was afraid of disease. He proffered aid in many ways, and frequently entered the sick-room for a brief period; but he never offered to sit up all night, and was careful not to come in contact with the unfortunate patient.

For nursing Rockingham the frail school teacher truly possessed more strength than all the men on the north shore. She was supported by the superhuman strength imparted by a love as undying as it was unspoken. At first, Digby attempted to dissuade her from her self-imposed task—which was not a task to the girl—but after the first day or two of his illness, he was too utterly prostrated to speak with emphasis on any subject, and gradually, as the malady fastened itself upon him, he lapsed into a comatose state.

M'Dougall travelled to Fort William and brought back the surgeon, who remained with Rockingham three or four days, and then departed, leaving the invalid in the sole care of Martha Seagrave.

But the disease ran its course, and at last left the sick man—left him with its mark upon him—left him feeble and emaciated, but left him. And, as she noted this fact, Martha Seagrave's feelings were strangely mingled. She had, of course, been deeply grieved to see her idol struggling day after day with the loathsome and terrible illness, and she had been fearfully anxious for the outcome. Yet it had not been an altogether dismal time for her. The man she loved had been entirely in her keeping; she alone had nursed him back to life, and she felt a pleasurable sense of proprietorship as she saw the fever abate and the deep gray eyes once more brighten with their natural light. And she knew, too, as she saw a daily improvement in her patient, that soon this proprietorship would have to end; that soon she would be barred, except in a casual way, from the presence of the man who owned her heart and controlled her every aim in life. Thinking thus, therefore, sadness mingled with the pleasure which Martha Seagrave experienced in the knowledge that, for the time being, Rockingham had cheated the grim king of terrors.

It was Christmas Day. A cold wave, accompanied by a tearing Arctic blizzard direct from Hudson Bay, was hurling itself upon Gravenhurst. It had been cold enough in all conscience before; but the temperature now dropped some forty degrees in a few hours, until it was so low that ordinary thermometers could keep no record of the intense cold. The house in which Rockingham lay lacked many of the comforts usually found even in homes of the North-west. The only heat was furnished by the cook-stove in the kitchen, and an old base-burner in the

office proper. As the cutting north wind gathered in force and intensity, howling through the windows as if glass were no obstacle at all, the sick man shivered again and again. True, he was convalescent; but he was feeble as a baby, his vitality being at such a low ebb as to be entirely powerless to resist the fearful weather such as one encounters only in the North-west Territory.

His nurse noted the effects of the blizzard with anxiety, which soon increased to absolute terror. She piled blankets upon the poor fellow, and forced him to drink a quantity of brandy. But her efforts were unavailing, and Rockingham grew steadily worse. His teeth chattered, and he shook until his bed rattled in brisk competition with the window-frames. Down in the diminutive kitchen, the wood-fire in the stove burned brightly, but the heat scarcely warmed the kitchen, much less the upper chambers. As near as possible to the old stove, Martha Seagrave hastily arranged a bed, and then ran up-stairs to where Rockingham lay. As if endowed with the combined strength of Hercules and Samson, this woman—rather under than over the average size—took the sick man, blankets and all, in her arms and carried him down to the warmer kitchen. And still it seemed impossible for the energetic nurse to impart any warmth to her patient. The minutes and hours found him still shivering, and all the time growing rapidly weaker. Both Martha Seagrave and Digby Rockingham knew that this state of things could not last long: they knew that it was merely a question of time and feeble human endurance.

Late in the afternoon the shivering ceased, and Rockingham sank into a cold and almost lifeless torpor. He felt that it was the beginning of the end. Martha thought so too. The girl placed her hand upon his, to feel his pulse, and he, reviving slightly, laid his other hand over hers. 'It will soon be over,' he whispered.—Great tears gathered in the eyes of the faithful nurse.—Rockingham continued: 'I shall not be able to tell them of all your goodness and self-denial, dear friend. God alone can repay such tender care as yours. I think He will—I have asked Him.'

There was a pause, during which these two, cut off from all the rest of the world by the storm and by disease, linked hands, while the tears continued to silently trickle down the girl's wan face.

'My books are to be yours when I am gone,' Rockingham whispered. 'And Martha, dear friend, I think I should like you to kiss me—it will seem to me a gentler farewell.' He closed his eyes as he spoke, and withdrew his hand from the girl's.

Much agitated, Martha bent over the young clergyman, whose life seemed to be fast ebbing away, and kissed him. Not coldly, upon his weary brow, or quietly, upon his wasted cheek; but, losing all control of herself, she pressed her lips to his, and throwing her arms about poor Rockingham, gave him, in one long passionate embrace, the token of that love which had been consuming her heart and life. 'Oh, my love, my love!' she moaned. 'Why must it be? Dear God, I cannot bear it—I love him so! Oh, I love him so!'

The pent-up feelings of weeks and months were liberated in that cry of pain and sorrow; and then, having confessed her secret to God and to the man she loved, Martha Seagrave fell upon the floor, her face buried in her hands, and sobbed as only well-nigh breaking hearts can sob. She was tired and weary with long-continued anxiety and ceaseless watching, and before her sobs died away the girl was asleep.

In less than an hour she awoke with a start. Her first thoughts and fears were for Rockingham, who lay quite motionless. But he was still alive, and, not only so, he was sleeping softly and breathing evenly. Thanks to his nurse, the fire, and the brandy, the chill had left him, and, humanly speaking, Digby Rockingham was again safe.

Realising this fact, the girl also realised the import of her passionate words uttered just before she fell asleep. In the presence of Death it had not seemed to her strange or unmaidenly that she should acknowledge, unasked, her unquenchable love. But now it was altogether different, and Martha's pale face became suffused with a deep flush, which she could not repress.

By the next day the storm had spent itself and the cold moderated. An early visitor to the office was Eli Brock, who was by this time a well man. He had for several days begged of Martha Seagrave permission to relieve her in caring for Rockingham. He had repeated his request, and was surprised when the girl promptly accepted his kindly offer.

Rockingham overheard their conversation, as Martha intended he should.

'I fear, Mr Brock, that it is no longer a question of choice with me. My health is giving out, and my nerves are all unstrung. I find myself saying and doing things which I should not. I need a rest; and as I can leave our friend in such good hands, I shall take that rest with an easier conscience.'

Half an hour later, she bade both men goodbye.

#### SOME NOTES ABOUT MANDRAKES.

THE folklore of flowers takes us back at a bound to old-world times. There is a store mingled of wisdom and superstition in the legends that cluster round almost every herb that grows. Science may look askance at the fabled virtues attributed to plants in the superstitious past, and few of the theories of the old herbalists who lived by 'culling simples' can perhaps be defended. But, apart from science, there is a quaint charm about this mystic learning which must always possess attractions of its own.

We doubt whether any better instance could be found of the wealth of tradition, legend, and story that centres in a single little plant than that which has accumulated round the Mandrake. It has a literature all to itself, and learning seems to have exhausted itself over its etymology. The plant itself is so insignificant that it would not naturally excite any great interest. Its leaves are long, sharp-pointed, and hairy, rising immediately from the ground, and are of a vivid dark green. Its flowers are dingy white stained with veins of purple, and its fruit of a pale orange about the

size of a nutmeg. The root is spindle-shaped, often divided into two or three forks, and rudely resembles the human form divine, from which possibly it takes its name. But if we turn from the plant itself to the monument of learning that has been erected around it, it is impossible not to be struck with the universal interest it has possessed for all people and in all ages. We do not know how many Shakespearean commentators have puzzled over the allusion in Juliet's immortal soliloquy:

And shrieks like mandrakes torn out of the earth,  
That living mortals hearing them run mad;

and contrasted it with the parallel apostrophe of Suffolk in *King Henry VI.*, who, asked by Queen Margaret whether he has not spirit to curse his enemies, replies:

Would curses kill, as doth the mandrake's groan,  
I would invent as bitter searching terms,  
As curst, as harsh, as horrible to hear.

As the legend runs, in order to procure the magic plant it was necessary to cut away all the suckers to the main root before pulling it up, which would cause death to any man or creature who heard the human screams it made. They had an ingenious if cowardly way of getting over the difficulty, which would certainly not commend itself nowadays to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. After carefully stopping their ears, they took a dog and tied its tail securely to the plant, and then walking away to a short distance called the dog to follow. In doing this, the luckless animal would pull up the much-coveted root, but would fall dead upon the spot. This was at anyrate, according to Josephus, the old Jewish practice; but the tradition at least long survived. There seems, however, later to have been a belief that if pulled up at 'holy times,' due attention being given to the repetition of proper 'invocations'—which must, we imagine, have been anything but holy—Satan would aid the person who made use of the plant. Whatever may be the origin for the theory that the root shrieked or groaned when separated from the earth, it certainly remained a current tradition long after Shakespeare immortalised it. Since, however, the root is named from its imaginary resemblance to the human figure, it is not unnatural to suppose that it may have been credited with possessing some of the attributes of human feeling. Langhorne, in the later part of the eighteenth century, tells us to

Mark how that rooted mandrake wears  
His human feet, his human hands.

Among its names in this connection are those of the 'Devil's Food,' and the 'Devil's Apple,' the 'tuphach el sheitan' of the Arabs. That this uncanny belief continued down to almost modern times is shown by an anecdote for which Madame du Noyer is responsible. According to this, on the murder of the Maréchal de Fabert in 1662, which was popularly attributed to his having broken a compact with the devil, two mandrakes of extraordinary beauty were found by his friends in his rooms, and these were regarded as conclusive proofs of the diabolical league, of which they failed to find, as they hoped, any written record.

There is considerable doubt whether the inter-

esting and coveted 'dudaim' of Scripture is the true mandrake. But there are several species of the plant. There is, for instance one growing in Switzerland, and another in the Grecian Archipelago and the south of Europe, and another in the East. All of these are, too, at least akin to the Deadly Nightshade. Indeed, all the translators agree in identifying this as the magic plant which Reuben found in the fields of Mesopotamia, and Leah bartered away to Rachel. There is a difficulty in reconciling the account in Canticles, in which it is said the 'dudaim give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits'—from which it is supposed that the plant possessed a perfume, whereas to ordinary tastes the mandrake stinks. But it has been remarked that, after all, the odour or flavour of plants is a matter of opinion, and that by Orientals both the odour and the intoxicating qualities of the mandrake, which is a strong narcotic, were highly prized.

Several travellers, too, whether similarly influenced or not we are unable to say, have praised in enthusiastic terms both its odour and its taste. Indeed, the plant exercises an influence not unworthy of the legendary virtues of the Mayisch or Lotus, and the Musa paradisiaca or Banana. Mount Tabor, Mount Juda, and the lower ranges of Lebanon and Hermon, are famous for their mandrakes, which bear fruit of the size and colour of a small apple, described by almost all travellers as of a most agreeable taste. But it has always been in great vogue in the East, both Jews and Arabs having from time immemorial also valued it for the magic virtues which were so long commonly attached to a love-philtre. This attribute, which dates at least from Old Testament times, remained current in Italy until the Middle Ages, for there are plenty of records showing that there was a brisk demand for the root among the Italian ladies.

Perhaps the most extraordinary of the properties attributed to it are those which it shared in common with the Rastritrava of Russia, of enabling housebreakers to pick locks, which is certainly one of the most amusing developments of the solar theory. 'Love,' it is said, 'laughs at locksmiths;' but the connection between the mandrake and 'burgling' seems a little forced. There is a tradition that the moonwort will unshoe horses if they step upon the plant, and similar powers have been attributed to the vervain and the mandrake. It is, on the other hand, still part of the rural lore of Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Hampshire, that the root will improve a horse's condition; but this seems to be founded upon the identification of the mandrake with the bryony, which played such a great part in old English herbalism. It is, however, more than doubtful whether the plants belong to the same class. But both are alike in the curious wealth of legend which surrounds them. East and West meet in their folk and flower lore.

As for the name of this wonder-working plant, the contest of the authorities seems endless; but the word is at least as old as the time of Pythagoras, who gave it a Greek equivalent. It was known in Rome, again, as 'semihomo;' while in Greece the plants, or their supposititious vagaries, were responsible for one of the names of Venus



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Mandrageritis. It was sometimes called 'Cir-  
cæa,' from Circe, the enchantress, who changed  
the companions of Ulysses into swine, and was  
curiously skilled in the use of magic herbs.  
From time immemorial the mandrake has been  
associated with enchantments. It was in popular  
belief one of the most powerful of the charms  
of witches, who were charged with keeping a  
mandrake fiend, that generally assumed the form  
of an ape. Bacon tells us in his *Natural History*:  
'Some plants there are, but rare, that have a  
mossie or downie root, and likewise have a  
number of threads like beards, as mandrakes,  
whereof witches and impostours make an ugly  
image, giving it the form of a face at the top of  
the root, and leave these strings to make a broad  
beard down to the foot.' From which it appears  
that Bacon was not altogether superior to the  
superstitions of his time.

But, as we have said, it is difficult to glance  
at the mass of learning which has accumulated  
round this talismanic herb without becoming  
more or less susceptible to the feeling that 'there  
are more things in heaven and earth than are  
dreamt of in our philosophy.' The old herbalists  
may have known something of the properties  
of simples, and they seem to have had a more  
than intimate acquaintance with those very  
forms of occultism that are now puzzling modern  
savants.

## THAT OLD WRITING-DESK.

By JAMES MURPHY.

It was just like the old miser to have that desk;  
it was also like me to buy it. I have always  
had a craze for buying things that nobody  
else would, with, as a matter of course, a fit of  
regret immediately after. Not unfrequently, so  
strong and sudden has been my repentance, have  
I left my deposit-money forfeited in the hands  
of the auctioneer, and declined to call for the  
article. However, in this case of the writing-  
desk I completed the purchase, mainly because I  
wanted something of the kind for occasional use,  
and not because I thought the article of any  
great intrinsic value; and not, above all, for  
any love or liking I had for its former owner.

Love or liking! It was very little of that  
any of his neighbours had for him, or any one  
else that knew him. How could they? Con-  
sider. He had been for years in receipt of a  
handsome income from his lands, and no one  
had ever been the better for it by a penny piece.  
He had farmed out his estate, demesne and  
all, until it was tilled up to the very hall  
door. He had allowed the once handsome  
mansion—handed down to him from genera-  
tions of high-spirited and generous ancestors—  
to fall into ruin and decay, until, with its  
stripped roof and broken windows, it became  
an eyesore and a nuisance in the neighbour-  
hood. His whole life was spent in cheese-  
paring and saving and hoarding, without one  
redeeming feature to break the vile monotony  
of his existence; unless the fact of his having  
brought his nephew and niece to live with  
him, when they had no place else to go to, and

no one else to support them, could be called  
a redeeming feature.

But it was not, it was anything but that.  
Helen Morgan was of herself quite enough to  
turn his old ruin of a mansion into a fairy  
palace of brightness—to make it happy and  
pleasant on the darkest day that ever gloomed  
from a winter's sky. The daughter of his  
youngest brother, she had been brought up to  
great expectations, with this result, that when  
her father died in London, it was found that every  
farthing he owned in the world, and a great  
deal that he did not own, had been lost in his  
Spanish silver-mining speculations, and that his  
daughter was left absolutely penniless. But  
she was handsome and agreeable, cultured and  
accomplished; and, if it were only by the rare  
beauty of her presence, amply repaid her uncle  
for the home he gave her.

She herself did not think so, however, for, in  
her simple, innocent way, Helen Morgan believed  
there never was any one so good or so generous  
as he. Except one other—George Morgan, her  
cousin. George and Henry were sons of another  
brother, who had been killed crossing a five-  
barred gate in the hunting-field, and needless to  
say he left no money behind him either. The  
saving qualities of the family seemed to be con-  
centrated in Sam; and on the principle, I  
suppose, that one can never have too much of  
a good thing, he possessed them in perfection.  
The brothers came to live with him, and per-  
haps two youths more dissimilar in character,  
manners, and habits never dwelt under the same  
roof. The former was free, clever, good-looking,  
and open-handed—when he had anything to be  
open-handed with; the latter was surly, wooden-  
headed, and quite as close-fisted, when occasion  
arose, as old Sam himself.

It was not to be supposed that two young  
people of the qualities and character of Helen  
and George Morgan could live long in the same  
household and in intimate relationship without  
falling in love. At least it was not to be sup-  
posed by anybody save old Sam Morgan, and it  
never occurred to him. I doubt indeed if he  
much more than knew there was such a word.  
Wherefore it was that when George had come  
into his twenty-fourth year, and his uncle finding  
it necessary to do something for him or to  
extend the family wealth, having proposed a  
match between himself and a neighbouring  
heiress, the young fellow resolutely refused. To  
be sure the young lady was not very prepossess-  
ing, and was, I am afraid, a little ill-tempered;  
but that should not have availed much in pres-  
ence of old Sam's eagerness for the match, and  
his readiness, contrary to his general character,  
to give him a liberal settlement. But George,  
to his uncle's intense annoyance, declined the  
proposed union; stated his reasons too, moreover,  
which were, if possible, more afflicting and unfor-  
givable than his refusal. Said reasons, or  
reason—for they finally came down to one—  
being, that he was in love with his cousin Helen,  
and that she, and no one else in this wide world,  
should be his wife; or if not she, certainly no  
one else.

What a to-do there was in the old mansion  
then, to be sure! George was denounced,  
disinherited, disowned, expelled! And Helen

would have been expelled too; but where could a girl go or what could she do? For the matter of that, there was not much for George to do either; the training he had received was not calculated much to fit him for the world. But what course there was open to him he promptly, with characteristic resolution, adopted—he enlisted.

You may depend upon it there was an affecting scene at the parting between the two, and that the old beech-tree, overhanging the gateway at the end of the avenue, heard some passionate vows and promises. You might be also pretty accurate in believing that if the tears dimmed Helen's diamond eyes, the crimson tints of the moss-rose were not very far from her cheeks.

But the parting moment came and went, and with it, too, went George, to join his regiment, now under orders for the distant Indian land, leaving Helen to sorrow in silence and loneliness for her absent lover. Whenever a letter or communication came from him, if ever one did, be sure it was treasured up in secret, and few eyes but her own looked upon it.

Things went on gloomily enough in the old dismal mansion—now a thousand times more dismal than ever—for the next three or four years: old Sam Morgan amassing wealth more and more every day, just as if he were to live for ever to enjoy it; and Helen and her remaining cousin passing the time as best they might. The latter, indeed, now that George was gone, became quite a favourite with his miser uncle. It was no wonder, for they were much akin in spirit, disposition, and ways of thinking.

There is nothing, the cynics tell us, so changeable as a woman's mind; but herein these libellers err. There is one thing more—the mind of a miserly old bachelor. Wherefore it is not surprising that after the lapse of some time, and when his health began to fail, old Sam Morgan became as anxious for a union between his surly nephew and his handsome niece as he had formerly been incensed at the bare idea of one between her and George. Perhaps it was because he grew to like the idea of his money remaining in the family; perhaps because it was only the development and outcome of one of his many humours and whims. But so it was, however, that he proposed the matter, with a by no means indefinitely expressed intention of leaving all his great wealth to them. Alas! to his astonishment and indignation, Helen, with the greatest possible distinctness and promptness—with a distinctness that put it beyond all possibility of doubt or peradventure whatever—declined. Not all his wealth could tempt her into it.

If old Sam were incensed and outraged on the previous occasion, his anger on the present was beyond all power of description. Nor was there any possible source of assuagement for him now, as there was on the occasion when George was exiled, for he could not in any kind of decency expel Helen from under his roof. Where was she to go? Not to India, I suppose.

Talking of India, however—from that country at this juncture began to come news which, by swift and frequent steps, served to attract and finally rivet men's attention on it—to the

exclusion of all other things whatever. A revolt, a mutiny, a rebellion, a massacre, had grown up there by breathless stages; and in a land of one hundred and twenty millions of people, a few thousand English soldiers were, on the turn of the clock almost, called upon to uphold English rule and government.

The first news of the outbreak came upon disbelieving and incredulous ears in England; but, following swiftly, came information that made men's hearts stir and throb as they never had throbbed or stirred before. The news of the massacre of Cawnpore sent a thrill of pain and indignation through the great heart of England. And, thereafter, the thoughts of every man, woman, and child in the land were fixed on the distant Indian empire, and on the handful of beleaguered men upholding her dominion there. Beleaguered! Worse than beleaguered. In the open plain, the swords and spears of troops that British officers had drilled and trained were massed in their thousands in mutiny and rebellion; artillery and guns that British gold had paid for, parked before and beside them. And in almost every barrack and compound of British India, treachery lurked in the black man's heart, and the demon of murder stood unseen at the white man's elbow! In all that swarming population, with disaffection rampant in the land, there were but a few British regiments—and England twelve thousand miles of stormy seas away!

From time to time news came of George Morgan; stray paragraphs in the newspapers, notices in despatches, and such-like, told us of what he was doing. First and most fearless where all were daring; readiest to confront the foe and the last to retreat; for eight-and-forty hours at a time in the saddle; compelled to sleep, whenever he got the chance, beside his unsaddled horse, the reins twisted around his arm, so that when the bugle rang out he could leap at once into the saddle; suffering hunger and thirst in a land where thirst meant, if not death, agony. We all knew well that, wherever he was, there was a true heart, and that no more gallant horseman was gathered under the shadow of the British flag in that distant land.

It was an effort of heroic resolve that made the Feringhee officers determine to attack and storm, with their small forces, the mighty city of Delhi, swarming with troops, and every soul in it disaffected to British rule, or in sympathy with the revolted sepoys. Nothing but the primest courage must have made the generals resolve on the attempt; and nothing but the keenest knowledge and unhesitating reliance on the valour of their men could justify it. Nor were they wrong. As an instance: The regiment of Guides, in which George Morgan was, crossed from Meerda to Delhi, by forced marches, a distance of five hundred and eighty miles, in twenty-two broiling days, and the evening of their arrival before the walls, after a short repose, were aroused to repel an overwhelming attack by sepoy horsemen! And thereafter it was constant fighting until the time came to storm the rebel hold.

But at length Delhi did fall! The power of the Indian hosts had gone down once again before the dauntless valour of the Feringhee; and once

again the days of Clive and Hastings, and Napier and Gough, had come on the land—Delhi had fallen! But, riding sword in hand over the cannon and sabring the sepoy gunners that still worked them under the very walls of Delhi's great mosque, George Morgan found his soldiering days numbered too. A Pathan sword had descended on his helmet, had glanced off it and come on his left shoulder, severing all the muscles of his arm. The blow stunned him; he reeled from his horse and fell; and thereafter, the wild uproar and clash of arms in every street of the conquered capital came but vaguely, or not at all, on his ears.

Needless to say how proud we were all when his name came home in the despatches, when the newspapers gave different versions of the affair, but all, however differing, agreeing in eulogy of him; and how more than delighted we were when we found that his wound was not mortal. But his soldiering days were over; he received the Victoria Cross, was retired, and came home.

What his old miserly uncle thought of him and his prowess, no one knew; he read all about it, but said nothing. He was ill, very ill, when his nephew came home. For days he continued in pretty much the same way, only by degrees growing worse, until he became so bad that all knew the end could not be far off; and then for the first time he had George called to his bedside. 'George, I have left you the'— But whatever more he was going to say remained unsaid, for he lay back in a fit of coughing; and when the coughing was over, so was his life—his last breath had gone out with it.

Well, we all thought George had been left amply provided for, and, indeed, every one was glad of it, for two reasons—first, because he needed it, and secondly, because he deserved it.

The day came when the will was to be opened; and behold! not one word was there about George—not one word. The old man had left every stick and stone and every guinea to the churl his brother. The miser had been as untrue in his death as he had been mean and avaricious during his life; and George was penniless. We could scarcely believe our ears, when the lawyer's managing clerk—the old lawyer himself had died a few days before Sam Morgan—read it out; and thought he must have made some mistake. But no; there it was all in black and white, in the clearest and most unmistakable handwriting, but all the more aggravating perhaps for that.

The new owner was not long in making changes. A new broom sweeps clean, and *he* was a new broom indeed. First, George was ordered off the premises. Where could he go? He came to me, as the only friend he had. The next thing the churlish heir did was to propose anew to Helen, never doubting now that, with the unquestioned inheritance of his uncle's wealth, she would gladly accept him. Therein, however, he made a mistake. She rejected the unamiable suitor in favour of his disinherited brother; his wealth could not sway or alter *her* affections—not in the slightest. Naturally, she had to go too; a solitary bequest of three hundred pounds was all that came to her share through the will.

Presently, Henry Morgan began to turn the half-ruined mansion quite out of doors. Pre-

paratory to putting it in new and complete repair, he called an auction of the effects and furniture; and what a rickety collection this latter was! And among other things was that old writing-desk of which I spoke at the beginning of my story.

I don't know what prompted me to buy it, for it was old, worm-eaten, and crazy. But I bought it, and placed it upright in a corner of the parlour, to be used whenever I had occasion for writing, which was not very often.

So that on the evening when we gave the party in honour of the wedding—did I tell you that George and Helen got married? No! Well, they did. And a handsomer or blither couple you could not see in a month of Sundays. She could not look otherwise than handsome; and George, his paralysed arm notwithstanding, looked just the type of what a bridegroom should be, his well set-up form was so fine, and his eye so calm and bright.

As I have said, we gave a party on the afternoon of the wedding day to the young couple. We were not likely to see them again for many a weary year, if ever; for they had made up their minds to make their home in the far west of Canada—in that district since well known as Manitoba; and so we determined that this last evening in the neighbourhood should be a pleasant one. Let me remember whom we had there. The rector and his wife and two daughters; the doctor and his two sons, the latter, full of life and fun, just home from the university; and quite a number of other people, mostly young. Among others present was the managing clerk, who, as before related, had read out the contents of old Sam's will. There was plenty of jollity and rejoicing, but there were not many tears shed for the memory of old Sam Morgan.

Well, in clearing the parlour for the dance, my wife insisted that the old desk should be left standing in the corner where it was, on its four crazy legs. I don't know why she did so, but I rather think it was in delicate mockery of the old fellow's memory, and as showing, in the only way she could, her contempt for the unhandsome way he had acted by her young friends. It was quite a foolish proceeding on her part; but you cannot reason with women, at least I never could—and the folly of it was shown unmistakably when, in one of the waltzes, Walter Hempwood, the doctor's son, and Lilian Hume, the rector's daughter, going a little too rapidly—Heaven bless their bright hearts!—careered full tilt against it; and, lo and behold you! the rickety legs were knocked clean from under the dazed thing; and it fell on its side on the floor, tumbling away from its moth-eaten supports.

'Confound the rickety thing!' said the lawyer; 'it wouldn't belong to old Sam if it were not up to some mischief.'

A kick! And behold! so worm-eaten and mouldered and aged was it, that it fell to pieces under the vigorous spurning, as if it were made of dust—which, indeed, from the quantity of that article that flew about, it seemed uncommonly likely it was. And behold again! out from the debris there rolled a neatly-folded parcel of paper, quite fresh and shining in its glossiness, and tied with a red tape. Where it came from no one could say, or where it could have lain

concealed, unless in some secret drawer which had remained unsuspected and entirely hidden from view. But there, at anyrate, it was.

'This seems to me like something in my way,' said the managing clerk, after a pause in which we all looked at it; whilst he took it up in his hands, gazed at it wonderingly for a second, and then opened it. He looked down its first page, turned over that, read down the second, whilst a curious expression grew into his face and eyes; and finally, throwing all over at once, turned to see the last, with the big red seal staring at him from the bottom thereof. For a moment he stood in suspense; and then with a thundering hurrah, that might have wakened old Sam in his blessed repose, waved it over his head, and running up to George Morgan and Helen, who shrank back a little, believing him to have gone suddenly demented, cried: 'Give me your hands! Give me your hands, I say! By the honours of war! this is grander news than the capture of Delhi! You're the owners of Castleholm.'

'What is it? What's the matter? What does it all mean?' everybody asked at once.

'What does it all mean?' echoed the clerk.

'Why, it's the will—the will. The last will and testament of Samuel Morgan, Esq., now on his death-bed, but sound of mind and body,' continued he, quoting in his exuberance the usual phraseology of such documents, which he knew off by heart; 'and it's properly signed and witnessed: and—he leaves all his property, every rafter and kitchen stone, every guinea and shilling and copper penny, to his beloved nephew, George Morgan!'

And so it was—beyond all doubt and question. You may depend upon it there was a startled group in my humble parlour for a moment or two, as we all held our breaths; and the next moment a hearty cheer burst forth.

What an evening it was, to be sure! What an insane sense of mild rejoicing possessed us all! How we patched up the broken desk again, to try to find out the exact spot where the precious document had lain concealed. How we regretted that the dear old gentleman lying in his grave could not be with us to partake of our delight! How we wondered at our own blindness in failing to see the many virtues that shone through his character during his long and exemplary life! How many a rare and ennobling trait, which we stupidly did not see before, now stood revealed to us in angelic brightness!

Well, there was no time lost in putting matters into legal shape, and the next day George Morgan and the lawyer posted away to Dublin, and at the very earliest moment had the document lodged in the Probate Court. A few days more settled all. There was no further need to talk of Manitoba or emigration; the hero of Delhi was heir to the property, and in a short time entered into possession.

It is hardly worth while delaying to tell of the rejoicings that took place in the country round when the news became known; or how well and worthily the wearer of the Victoria Cross and his handsome wife filled the position of lord and lady of the estate; or of what a magnificent house-warming was given when the mansion, being renewed and refurnished, was reoccupied

by them; nor of many other pleasant things which I should like to speak of if I had space and time. Only this: that, returning good for evil, George Morgan, at Helen's special request, instead of turning his brother away, appointed him agent and manager of his estates—a position which, curiously enough, he filled to the satisfaction of everybody.

#### A GOSSIP.

MIDNIGHT, and the stars were gleaming

In the deep blue dome of the sky,  
And the moon was softly beaming  
O'er the earth from her throne on high.

'Twas then that the poplars stately,  
To the stars in a whisper clear,  
Told the news of the day sedately,  
Nor dreamt of a listener near.

'She came,' said the taller, gravely,  
'To our shade when the sun was low'—  
'And left,' cried the younger, 'bravely,  
Though her sweet eyes looked her woe.'

'She came,' again said the elder,  
With a sudden angry frown,  
And a tap on the younger's shoulder,  
'To our shade as the sun went down,

'With a letter; I guessed the writer,  
Whose words could light her eyes  
And flush her cheeks, till brighter  
They shone than roseate skies.

'She broke the seal, and faded  
The red of her cheek to white,  
And I read the lines, well aided  
By the gleam of the red sunlight.

'It was penned on the eve of his bridal  
To a lady of high degree—  
And regretful words and idle—  
"Not half so fair as she."

'And she read the lines all over  
With never a sob or tear,  
Of him who had been her lover  
In the spring-time of the year.

'And I hope on some happier morrow  
When her grief has lost its smart,  
She may smile at her present sorrow,  
And trust to a truer heart.'

MAGDALEN ROCK.

#### \* \* TO CONTRIBUTORS.

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